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FREEDOM FOR ALL



By
PEARL S. BUCK

THE POST WAR WORLD COUNCIL
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TINDER FOR TOMORROW

By PEARL S. BUCK

The Japanese weapon of racial propaganda in Asia is beginning to show signs of effectiveness. This is not because of peculiar skill in the way it is being used, but because it is being presented to persons who have had unfortunate experiences with English and American people.

Race prejudice continues unabated among white people today, the Japanese are saying. Tokyo radio programs daily send their broadcasts over Asia in their campaign to drive out the white man. They dwell upon white exploitation of colored troops and cite mistreatment of Filipinos by the American military and similar treatment of Indian troops by the English. Germany is helping Japan to stir up race hatred in Malaya, India and the Philippines by insisting that the interests of Asia lie with Japan and not with England and the United States. "The colored peoples," Japanese propaganda says over and over again in a thousand forms, "have no hope of justice and equality from the white peoples because of their unalterable race prejudice against us."

Human Stupidity

It will be better for us if we acknowledge the danger in this Japanese propaganda. The truth is that the white man in the Far East has too often behaved without wisdom or

justice to his fellow man. It is worse than folly—it is dangerous today—not to recognize the truth, for in it lies the tinder for tomorrow. Who of us can doubt it who has seen a white policeman beat a Chinese coolie in Shanghai, a white sailor kick a Japanese in Kobe, an English captain lash out with his whip at an Indian vender—who of us, having seen such oriental sights or heard the common contemptuous talk of the white man in any colored country, can forget the fearful bitter hatred in the colored face and the blaze in the dark eyes? Who of us can be so stupid as not to see the future written there? The most dangerous human stupidity has been that of the white race in the baseless prejudice through which even the meanest of white creatures has felt he could despise a king if his skin were dark. Yet, if this stupidity were limited to the mean, how easily it might be cured! But among us even some who are able, even some who are good, are sometimes so blind.

The effect therefore of this Japanese propaganda cannot be lightly dismissed. It lies uneasy in the minds and memories of many at this moment who are loyally allied with Britain and the United States, in the minds and memories of colored peoples of Asia. Yes, and it lies uneasy, too, in the minds and memories of many colored citizens of the United States who cannot deny the charge and must remain loyal in spite of it. For such minds realize that, though Nazism may give them nothing but death, yet the United States and Britain have given them too little for life in the past and not even promises for the future. Our colored allies proceed to war against the Axis not deceived or in ignorance. They know that it may not be the end of

the war for them even when Hitler has gone down and Nazism is crushed and Japan returned to her isles again. The colored peoples know that for them the war for freedom may have to go on against the very white men at whose side they are now fighting.

In common sense, if for no other reason, the white peoples ought now to realize the truth, too—that war may not be ended for them either, when Nazism falls. They must face the question: will their colored allies then become their enemies? That they may be very terrible enemies is no idle threat. If the colored peoples fight with reservations in this present war against the Axis and if the white peoples fight with no reservations, the colored peoples will have the greater residue of strength. There may be no interval between this war and the next unless we give proof now of our sincerity.

End of Imperialism

We must realize, we citizens of the United States, and this whether Britain realizes it or not, that a world based on former principles of empire and imperial behavior is now impossible. It cannot exist. We must make clear our determination for real democracy for all peoples with mutual responsibility demanded of all to fulfill its conditions. Nor can we postpone such decision for democracy by saying, "Let's win this war first." We cannot even win this war without convincing our colored allies—who are most of our allies—that we are not fighting for ourselves as continuing superior over colored peoples. The deep patience of colored peoples is at an end. Everywhere among them there is the

same resolve for freedom and equality that white Americans and British have, but it is a grimmer resolve, for it includes the determination to be rid of white rule and exploitation and white race prejudice, and nothing will weaken this will.

We can of course utilize the force of this will if we have the wisdom. Nothing would so nerve our colored allies abroad to put forth their whole effort now as the conviction that white leaders mean what they say about democracy. There is hope even in India that England would mean what she said if she could be got to say it. There are few simple things in this world, but at the moment the simplest, if one is at all familiar with mass thinking among the peoples of Asia, is that our allies there will fight with all their strength for real democracy. But if they are not soon convinced, and by unmistakable means, of the sincere democratic determination of the English and Americans, if they fear that they must be reduced one day to fighting for themselves, there will be many thoughtful men and women who will declare openly what they are now thinking and saying secretly, "Will it not be better for us to come to terms, not with Hitler, who is after all a white man of the most arrogant type, but with Japan, and utilize the military and modern resources of that country to free us from white rule?"

Majesty—Justice—Peace

It takes no great practical sense for any colored people to see that even if Japan took the position over them of conqueror it would be easier to get rid of one victor than of several. There could have been nothing reassuring or comforting to our Asiatic allies in the closing words of

Churchill's first speech in Washington, "The British and American peoples will for their own safety and the good of all walk together side by side in majesty, justice and peace." An England, a United States, "walking together in majesty," can only mean to the colored peoples a formidable white imperialism more dangerous to them than anything even a victorious Japan can threaten.

The advocates of an American Union Now with the white, English-speaking portions of the British Empire, "with such other peoples as may be found ready and able to unite," are heading us straight into the gravest war we can yet imagine. What can China, the oldest and most pragmatic of democracies, think of a white, English-speaking Union which excludes her at the very start? We may as well present Japan with battleships and bombers as to go on with a union which denies democracy in this fashion. Only Atlantic-minded persons can fail to see that in so limited a union we should already be sowing the seeds of the next war. It does not do to be only Atlantic-minded at this moment.

The United States and England are at a very critical moment in this war. Our allies, India, China, the Philippines and Malaya, are waiting for us, whether they tell us so publicly or not, to make clear the stand of the white peoples toward them. Are we all-out for democracy, for total justice, for total peace based on human equality, or are the blessings of democracy to be limited to white people only? The answer must be made clearly and quickly. To evade the question, to delay the answer, is to reply in the negative. And the United States must now take the lead.

Cannot Trust English Leadership

For we cannot now trust to English minds, however we admire them, nor to English leadership, however strong. We must think and act for ourselves. If our allies cannot be assured, America may find herself deserted in the Pacific when she supremely needs allies there. It is only natural that England should think first and most of Hitler, the wolf at the door. It is to be expected that English minds cannot take seriously enough the full threat of Japan also to us. Why should they when Americans themselves have not taken Japan seriously enough and do not now take any Asiatic people seriously enough? Pearl Harbor and Manila are today awful witnesses of our ignorance. There will be other witnesses as stern before we are done with this war. If England cannot understand fully our danger in the Pacific, let us not ourselves be misled. We Americans face the Orient as well as Europe, and we face it not as the ruler of a great subject people held under military power. We face an Asia in which we have no long-established power. It is too dangerous for us to accept any estimate of the Pacific except our own. We must for our own sakes give our allies in the Far East confidence in our leadership toward full democracy.

But can the United States provide such leadership? This also the Far Eastern allies are asking. Japan is busily declaring in the Philippines, in China, in India, Malaya and even Russia that there is no basis for hope that colored peoples can expect any justice from the people who rule in the United States, namely, the white people. For specific proof the Japanese point to our treatment of our own colored

people, citizens of generations in the United States. Every lynching, every race riot, gives joy to Japan. The discriminations of the American army and navy and the air forces against colored soldiers and sailors, the exclusion of colored labor in our defense industries and trade unions, all our social discriminations, are of the greatest aid today to our enemy in Asia, Japan. "Look at America," Japan is saying to millions of listening ears. "Will white Americans give you equality?"

Who can reply with a clear affirmative? The persistent refusal of Americans to see the connection between the colored American and the colored peoples abroad, the continued, and it seems even willful, ignorance which will not investigate the connection, are agony to those loyal and anxious Americans who know all too well the dangerous possibilities.

People of Asia Wait

Today the peoples of Asia are still waiting, still watchful. But they are lending an ear to what Japan is saying because they know there is truth in it. For once Japanese propaganda is more than propaganda and they know it. Lies can be laughed off but truth is a sober thing. Who can blame our colored allies if they have reservations toward us, if they doubt our intention for true democracy for them? Our ignorance of how they feel is dangerous as the ignorance of England is dangerous, as the ignorance of France was dangerous even to destruction. But ours is a peculiar danger, for one tenth of our own nation is colored. Our relation

to the colored peoples and democracy does not even lie so far off as Africa or India. It is just outside our doors, it is inside our homes. The deepest loyalties today are not national.

But even if Americans realize our danger, our responsibility, our peculiar position, can we produce the necessary leadership for democracy? What is this division between our belief in democracy for all and our practice of democracy only for some? It is not hypocrisy. We Americans are not hypocritical except in small, amusing ways. Talk to any dirt American and he honestly believes in equality and justice and in giving everybody democratic rights. But mention to him the colored man and you will not believe your own ears. This cannot be the same man talking, you will say. No, the colored man cannot have the same treatment as the white man, it seems. "Why?" you inquire. The white American scratches his head. "Well, it just don't work that way," he says, and thereby gives huge comfort to our present enemies the Japanese.

Split Personality

What is the matter with this American? It is clear enough. He suffers from what is called in psychology a split personality. He is two distinct Americans. One of him is a benevolent, liberty-loving, just man. The other one of him is a creature who may or may not be benevolent but who is certainly undemocratic in his race attitudes, and who, on this subject, throws justice and human equality to the winds as completely as any Fascist.

Who can reconcile these two personalities into an inte-

grated being fit for democratic leadership in the world today? If the two personalities were to be found always in separate individuals it would be simple enough—we could go to the mat for the one we want. We could even have a civil war again. But the reason why the other civil war we had never really gave the colored man freedom and democracy is still the reason why we do not give them to him today. The split personality which is America is found not in separate individuals but in most of the individuals of our nation. We are divided in our individual structure.

This division in personality is desperately serious at this moment when millions of people in the world are looking for leadership in democracy from us. If we cannot assemble ourselves and provide it, leadership will be found elsewhere. Japan may supply it or Russia may supply it—Russia is justly proud of her freedom from race prejudices. But let Americans be sure of this—unless we can declare ourselves whole for total democracy now, we shall lose our chance to make the world what we want it to be, we shall lose even our place in the world, whatever our military victories are. For most of the people in the world today are colored.

Golden Age of Democracy

How can we integrate ourselves for democracy? The first step toward unifying a split personality is to realize that there is the split. The next step is to reject the undesired self. We must be willing to see that our inner division has the gravest relation now to outer events, to the success of this war for us, to world events which will shape an entirely

new era. Whether it will be a golden age of democracy depends on whether we choose democracy now.

We know this better than we are willing to acknowledge. It must be sternly said that it is the white peoples who have the deepest race prejudices. This is in itself a sign of insecurity and fear. And we do well to be afraid if we intend to persist blindly in our prejudices. If we plan to persist as we are, then we are fighting on the wrong side in this war. We belong with Hitler. For the white man can no longer rule in this world unless he rules by totalitarian military force. Democracy cannot so rule. Democracy if it is to prevail at this solemn moment in human history can do so only if it purges itself of that which denies democracy, if it dares to act as it believes.

(Reprinted from ASIA MAGAZINE, March 1942)

DEMOCRACY AND THE NEGRO

By PEARL S. BUCK

The editorial in THE NEW YORK TIMES of Nov. 12, "The Other Side of Harlem," denies the basic cause for the situation in our country of which the new manifestation of crime in Harlem is only a symptom slight enough for what it signifies. Nor are the constructive measures proposed sufficient. It would be impossible for any accumulation of social welfare work to solve the situation which produces crime in Harlem. We all know that merely to make arrests and impose jail sentences can be nothing but an emergency measure and one which promises no fundamental improvement for the future. But equally palliative are the efforts of welfare workers on the basis upon which they are now organized.

The reason why colored Americans are compelled to live in ghettos, where they are helpless against high rents and miserable housing, is the segregation to which race prejudice compels them. Race prejudice compels colored people to take what work they can get because there are so many jobs Negroes cannot get. Race prejudice makes and keeps Negroes' wages low because some labor unions will not admit colored labor on the same basis as white labor. Race prejudice and race prejudice alone is the root of the plight of people in greater and lesser Harlems all over our country.

Hope Becoming Despair

As a result of the effects of race prejudice a very serious conviction is gradually becoming settled in the minds of colored Americans all over our country. They are coming to see that what they have been taught and have believed is not true—namely, that if colored people can be patient and good and show themselves obedient and humble they will inevitably prove themselves worthy citizens and will therefore receive the rewards of full citizenship. They are beginning to believe, and this in very large numbers, that individual or even collective worth as human beings gains them nothing so long as they are Negroes. The hopefulness natural to their race is now changing to despair. Colored leaders are saying today that no amount of achievement will gain anything for the colored people as a whole, and that, moreover, they no longer believe the people of the United States will fight for democracy. Americans may fight to live and do as they like, they say, but not for democracy.

This conviction of some colored leaders and many more colored people is rapidly permeating the whole twelve millions. When hope is taken away from a people moral degeneration follows swiftly after. Young colored men and women today are giving up hope for justice or security in their own country. When this hopelessness reaches down to certain strata in any society, outbreaks of crime are inevitable. We must expect it in many places besides Harlem. It has already occurred in other cities.

The swiftness with which this long-gathering despair has come to a present head is due, perhaps, more than to any

other immediate cause, to the refusal of the majority of defense industries to employ colored labor on anything like an equal basis with white labor. To the colored American this is final proof of the hopelessness of his plight, that even in the defense of his country he is not allowed his share of work.

Segregation Curbs Patriotism

And yet it may be a mistake to say that this denial of the chance at jobs is more to blame than the resolute segregation in the Army or the practical limitation in the Navy. The colored American, thanks to an education in democracy, now really wants to see his country a democracy. When he defends the United States of America he does not want to do so segregated and limited. This contradicts his idea of a democracy. He has grown up a good deal since the World War. And he has not forgotten that war. He is willing to fight and die again, but not for something he does not possess anyway.

The white American is conscious of this feeling now seething and mounting in the hearts of his colored countrymen. But the white American sedulously avoids acknowledging or indeed even facing it. With the same curious blindness which none of us could understand in France, we white Americans avoid the reality in our own country. We do not want to discover the real truth about the colored American, which is that our race prejudice denies him democracy. We refuse to face it because we do not want to change the status of the colored person. We wish to keep him the servant of the white man.

Hypocrisy Seen

I am, I think, realistic and objective on this matter of race, having lived most of my life among colored peoples. My own ancestry is entirely Southern, and I am very familiar with the problems of white and colored in the South. I do not, however, believe their solution is to be found in what the average white Southerner says, in the familiar patter, that the Negro is a childish creature, delightful enough in his place, who only wants to be taken care of and fed and sheltered and treated kindly. That the Negro in the South often glibly falls in with such assertions means nothing; that Negro is afraid of his white master and says what the white man wants him to say. The same Negro quickly expresses himself in totally different terms as soon as he changes his locale and is relieved of his fear.

But be that as it may, the real point is that our democracy does not allow for the present division between a white ruler race and a subject colored race, and we ought to make up our minds as to what we want and then move to accomplish it. If the United States is to include subject and ruler peoples, then let us be honest about it and change the Constitution and make it plain that Negroes cannot share the privileges of the white people. True, we would then be totalitarian rather than democratic; but if that is what we want, let us say so and let us tell the Negro so. Then the white Americans will be relieved of the necessity of hypocrisy and the colored people will know where they are. They may even settle down into a docile subject race, so long as we are able to keep the weapons of rebellion from them—and these include education.

As an American I should deplore any such thing, and yet the world needs this sort of clarification. Democracy now suffers from vagueness because of the lack of relation between principle and action. With all the evils that Hitlerism has, at least it has one virtue, that it makes no pretense of loving its fellow-man and of wanting all people to be free and equal. Everybody knows where Nazism stands and what to expect of it. Cruel as it is, and dangerous as it is to civilization, it is less cruel, and it may be even less dangerous in the end, than the sort of democracy which is not real enough or strong enough to practice what it preaches. To destroy hope utterly is kinder than to allow it without intending to let it be fulfilled.

Patience Waning

The importance of facing the situation between white and colored people in our own country is twofold—it is upon this rock that our own ship of democracy may go down first, and upon this rock, too, that all peoples may divide into the ultimate enmity. Everywhere in the world colored peoples are asking each other if they must forever endure the arrogant ruling white race. They feel they have been very long patient, but they cannot be patient forever and they will not. In India such men as Nehru, now again in jail at the hands of white men fighting for democracy in Europe; in our own country colored Americans, as intelligent, and well educated as Nehru, barred by their color alone from an equal chance with white Americans to earn their living or to defend democracy—there is a deep, subtle, dangerous relationship between them. We are foolish if we do not realize it.

For in many educated colored Americans hopelessness results not in simple crime but in a rejection of patriotism. There are those, and some of them leaders, who favor Japan in the present crisis, seeing in Japan the future leader of all colored peoples in the world. There are those who prefer Hitler to British imperialism feeling that if English rule over colored races can be destroyed, then Hitler can be dealt with afterward as the less established evil. At home and abroad the white race has the choice to make—whether it will follow the totalitarian principle of ruler and subject races, even to the inevitable end of rebellion and the worst of wars, or whether peoples of all colors will decide to work out ways of living in mutual harmony and freedom.

Crisis Near At Hand

Such is the situation between colored and white peoples at this moment. It is idle to say that the crisis is two steps off and let us attend first to defense and the present war. Crisis between white and colored is not two steps off—it is close, inextricably mingled with this war, because the war against Nazism carries race equality or inequality as one of its main issues. It does no good that we ourselves keep the issue hushed and hidden and apart from the thinking of the mass of the white people. The crisis approaches, whether white people are willing to know it or not. It approaches in the world, and with that inexorable march our own people are keeping step.

What then should we do if we are honest believers in the democratic way of life? We must move swiftly and at

once, and our President should not fear so to move, to do away with the effects of race prejudice upon colored Americans. Race prejudice cannot be taken out of people unfortunately by surgical operation, although it is an evil and foreign growth. Children do not have it until they catch it from older people. I have frequent proof of this, the most recent being through the 12-year-old son of an American friend newly returned from China.

This white child goes to public school in a New Jersey town. When a class picnic was to be held it was found that the place chosen excluded colored people. To his deep indignation the boy found that his teachers, instead of changing the place, accepted the exclusion and managed by "tactful ways" to see that no colored children came to the picnic. The white boy was shocked to the soul at this injustice in his own land to which he had long looked with love and pride while he was growing up in China. His hurt was personal, too, because his own best friend happened to be a fine colored boy. "I won't go if Henry can't go," was his right decision.

Adolescents Little Prejudiced

Nor do adolescents have race prejudice in anything like the degree that older people have. Recently in Texas there were a champion white football team and a champion colored team at high schools in the same city. Of course their managers and coaches would not schedule them to play each other. But the white team went out one morning by secret arrangement and played the colored team. They said to their coach when they returned: "We just wanted to

see which of us was better." As it happened, it was a tie game, and though there is symbolism enough in that ideal ending, the significance of the incident, and of plenty of others like it, is that the boys, colored and white, had no prejudice against each other.

Intelligent white people seldom suffer from race prejudice so severely as ignorant ones, and there are many who would, if they dared, acknowledge that they have none whatever. But too few dare. For wherever the disease of race prejudice is found it is bitter and incurable and dies only with death.

But if nothing can remove race prejudice from those in whom it is ingrained, they should not be allowed to violate our nation's democracy. At least, our government can and should see to it that all Americans shall have equal economic opportunity and that colored people in this democracy shall not suffer insult because of their color. It can and should insist that colored citizens shall share responsibility with white citizens for the welfare of the nation, and thus remove the chief reason for the half-tolerant, wholly patronizing contempt of the white for the colored and thereby build in the colored citizen belief in himself. Democratic government must keep apace of science and realize that there is no basis beyond prejudice for the belief that one race is intrinsically superior to another. Continued injustice may make any one inferior, temporarily, regardless of his color.

Conquer Race Prejudice

I read with complete approval of every plan to better the conditions under which colored people must live and work. But until race prejudice is conquered and its effects removed,

the bitter fact remains that the colored American knows he will not get a better job for being better educated and better housed or for having in his childhood more playgrounds. He will not be given an equal chance with the white American of his class and ability. Race prejudice will still deny democracy to him.

Are we Americans to go on accepting the stupidities of race prejudice? I know of the oft-repeated wearisome defense. Intermarriage is the fearful specter behind everything. On that there is but one answer. Are we to deny to 12,000,000 Americans the rights and privileges of our country, and are we to risk our very democracy itself, by maintaining a determined ruler-subject relationship between white and colored, because some day a few white and colored individuals may choose to marry each other?

Is democracy right or is it wrong? If it is right, then let us dare to make it true.

Perkasie, Pa., November 14, 1941.

(Reprinted from THE NEW YORK TIMES, November 15, 1941)

POST WAR WORLD COUNCIL

A peace dictated by Hitler and the Japanese militarists would be a disaster unspeakably tragic, but no peace dictated by triumphant armies will endure. The Post War Council is alarmed at the growth of an American Imperialist state of mind as expressed by Wendell Willkie—"American democracy must rule the world," and by Secretary of the Navy Knox when he said that the combined British and American fleets will rule the oceans "for a hundred years."

When the war is over and the soldiers and sailors return home, they, and all mankind will wish to be assured of a lasting peace that will command the support of all peoples of all races, nations and creeds. This must be a peace based on a more far-reaching and more specific program than the Atlantic Charter and more fundamental than Wilson's 14 points.

The peace we seek is one that will end all wars and release man's extraordinary technological skill for the conquest of poverty everywhere. We have no complete blueprint for this post war world, nor does anyone else, but we do know the problems, social, economic and political, and we are searching for the answers.

The Post War World Council is convinced that world cooperation is necessary if predatory world anarchy is to be crushed. While we are of the belief that Anglo-American world domination would be less bad than any other, we are opposed to domination by any nation or group of nations. This would lead inevitably to another war, totalitarianism and the abnegation of democracy. It would incur the hatred of all peoples dominated. It would be the road to despair, not the road to freedom. It would mean the complete militarization of the United States to a degree never before equalled in the history of mankind. It would mean the perpetuation of colonial imperialism.

Our program is no more static than the world scene, but our points of emphasis are basic and we are aware that the conduct of the war conditions the peace. We stand for this program:

ON THE HOME FRONT

1. Preserve the Bill of Rights.
2. Let the costs of war be borne according to ability through taxation. Prevent inflation and eliminate war profits.
3. Maintain unaltered and extend social services and social legislation.

4. Establish democratic controls over economic processes.
5. Avoid a militarization of the mind and an extension of compulsory military training in the schools.
6. Extend democracy in all branches of the services with promotion based on merit, not favoritism.
7. Assure equality of opportunity for Negroes in all phases of life.
8. Continue opposition to all manifestations of anti-Semitism.

ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT

1. Educate for democratic world organization.
2. Send humanitarian aid, under proper safeguards, to all peoples who need it.
3. Work for the earliest possible attainment of a just and lasting peace, to be worked out by all parties to the war in full and free conference, not dictated by the victors to the vanquished.
4. Recognize the full equality of all races, white and colored alike.
5. Assure free access to all peoples to all raw materials and markets.
6. Grant freedom to India and to all other subject peoples.

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